The Chastisement of Chota Haridas

Narrator: At Jagannatha Puri, in the association of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, lived Bhagavan Acharya, who was certainly a gentleman, a learned scholar and a great devotee. He was fully absorbed in thoughts of fraternal relationships with Krsna. He was an incarnation of a cowherd boy and thus his dealings with Svarupa Damodar Goswami were very friendly.

Bhagavan Acarya's father, whose name was Satananda Khan was an expert statesman, whereas Bhagavan Acarya was not at all interested in the management of the state. Indeed, he was almost in the renounced order of life.

Bhagavan Acarya's brother, whose name was Gopala Bhattacharya, had studied Vedanta philosophy at Benares and had then returned to Bhagavan Acarya's home. Bhagavan Acarya took him to meet Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu but, knowing that Gopala Bhatacharya was a Mayavadi scholar, the Lord did not like to associate with him. Nevertheless, because Gopala Bhatacharya was related to Bhagavan Acarya, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu feigned pleasure in seeing him. The Lord's servant, Swarup Damodar, was disturbed by this.

Bhagavan: Gopala Bhatacharya, my younger brother, has returned to my home, having concluded his study of Vedanta philosophy. Please hear his explanations of Vedanta.

Sivananda: You have lost your intelligence in the association of Gopala and therefore you are eager to hear the Mayavadi philosophy. When a Vaisnava listens to the Sariraka-bhasya, the Mayavadi commentary upon Vedanta-sutra, he gives up the Krsna Conscious attitude that the Lord is the master and the living entity is His servant. Instead, he considers himself the Supreme Lord! The Mayavada philosophy presents such a jugglery of words that even a highly elevated devotee who has accepted Krsna as his life and soul changes his decision when he reads the Mayavada commentary on Vedanta-sutra.

Bhagavan: We are all fixed at the lotus feet of Krsna with our

hearts and souls. Therefore, the Sariraka-bhasya cannot change our minds!

Sivananda: Nevertheless, when we hear the Mayavada philosophy, we hear that Brahman is knowledge and the universe of maya is false, but we gain no spiritual understanding.

Bhagavan: Excuse me, I will not trouble you further. I will see that my brother returns to his district.

Narrator: One day, Bhagavan Acarya invited Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu to dine at his home. He was preparing rice and various types of vegetables There was a devotee in the community named Chota Haridasa who had a particularly beautiful voice. Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu enjoyed hearing Chota Haridasa sing devotional songs. Bhagavan Acarya called Chota Haridasa to his home and spoke as follows:

Bhagavan: Please go to the home of Sikhi Mahiti and ask to speak to his sister. In my name, ask her some fine rice and bring it here. Today, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu is coming for lunch and I want all the preparations to be first class!

Chota: Yes, prabhu.
(He leaves.)

Narrator: Sikhi Mahiti's sister was named Madhavidevi. She was an elderly lady who always performed austerities and she was a very advanced devotee. Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu considered three and a half people to be His intimate devotees. They were Swarup Damodar, Ramanda Raya and Sikhi Mahiti and Madhavidevi, being a woman, was the half.

Chota: Hari bol, Mataji, I have come to beg some nice rice in the name of Bhagavan Acarya from you. It is for SriCaitanya Mahaprabhu's lunch today.

Madhavidevi: Of course, I have some first class rice. Please take this.
(She gives Chota Haridasa a bag.)

Chota: Thank you, Mother.

Madhavidevi: You're welcome.
(Chota Haridasa returns to the home of Bhagavan Acarya.)

Chota: *Hare Krsna Hare Krsna Krsna Krsna Hare Hare*
Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare
Hare Krsna Hare Krsna Krsna Krsna Hare Hare
Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare
Here is the rice, prabhu.

Bhagavan: (inspecting rice) Ahh this is the best quality rice!

Chota: Will you require anything else, prabhu?

Bhagavan: No, thank you.
(Chota Haridasa leaves.)

Narrator: In great affection, Bhagavan Acarya cooked the rice, as well as a variety of vegetables and other preparations dear to Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. He also obtained remnants of Lord Jagannatha and digestive aids such as ground ginger and also lime with salt. At noon, the Lord came to take His noon meal.

Caitanya: Hare Krsna!

Bhagavan: Please come in and let me serve You.
(Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu sits and is served many preparations by Bhagavan Acarya.)

Caitanya: MMmmm This is delicious! This rice is really a treat! Where did you get this wonderful, rice. Bhagavan Acarya?

Bhagavan: I got it by begging from Madhavidevi.

Caitanya: You must have been cooking all day, who went to beg the rice?

Bhagavan: It was Chota Haridasa.

Caitanya: Well, this is certainly the best lunch to be had in all the three worlds!

(Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu eats with great enthusiasm for a while. Bhagavan Acarya keeps serving more. Then, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu gets up, Bhagavan Acarya pours water over Lord Caitanya's hands. Then Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu leaves.)

Narrator: Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu did not like that Chota Haridasa, a brahmachari, had spoken to a woman and taken charity from her. After returning to His residence, He gave the following order to his servant **Govinda:**

Caitanya: From this day forward, do not allow Chota Haridasa to come here.

(Govinda looks shocked. They leave.)

Narrator: When Chota Haridasa heard that he had been ordered not to approach Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, he was very unhappy. No one could understand why he had been ordered not to come.

(Swarup Damodar and other devotees approach Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu.)

Sivananda: Mahaprabhu, what great offense has Chota Haridasa committed? Why has he been forbidden to come to Your door? He has now been fasting for three days!

Caitanya: I cannot tolerate seeing the face of a person who has accepted the renounced order of life but who still talks intimately with a woman. So strongly so the senses adhere to the objects of their enjoyment that indeed a wooden statue of a woman attracts the mind of even a great saintly person. One should not sit closely with one's mother, sister or daughter, for the senses are so strong that they may attract even attract even a person advanced in knowledge. There are many persons with little in their possession who accept the renounced order of life like monkeys. They go here and there engaging in sense gratification and speaking intimately with women.

Sivananda: Haridasa has committed a small offense; therefore, O

Lord, please be merciful to him. Now, he has received a sufficient lesson. In the future, he will not commit such an offense.

Caitanya: My mind is not under My control. It does not like to see anyone in the renounced order who talks intimately with women. You should all tend to your respective engagements. Give up this useless talk. If you speak this way again, I shall go away and you will no longer see me here!

(All the devotees cover their ears with their hands and leave for their respective duties. Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu also leaves.)

Scene Two

Sivananda: Parmananda Puri prabhu, would you please talk to Mahaprabhu on our behalf? We just can't understand why Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu is so harsh with Chota Haridasa. He respects you as a senior Vaisnava and Godbrother; surely you can ask Him to show mercy to Chota Haridasa.

Paramananda: Yes, I will try.

(Paramananda Puri approaches Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, who offers obeisances and offers His Godbrother a seat by His side.)

Caitanya: What is your order? For what purpose have you come here?

Paramananda: Mahaprabhu, I pray that you will show mercy to Chota Haridasa. Forgive his indiscretion and allow him to have Your association.

Caitanya: My dear lord, please hear me - it is better for you to stay here with all the Vaisnavas. Please give Me your permission to go to Allanath. I will remain there alone; only Govinda will go with Me. **(calling)** Govinda! Govinda! Please come here!

(Govinda enters. Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu offers obeisances to Paramananda Puri and starts to leave. Paramanada Puri jumps up and comes before Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu in great humility.)

Paramananda: No, no, my dear Lord. Please sit back down here. You are the independent Personality of about You? All Your

activities are for the benefit of people in general. We cannot understand them, for Your intentions are deep and grave.

(They leave.)

Scene Three

(All the devotees go to Chota Haridasa.)

Sivananda: Please hear us, Haridasa, for we all wish you well. Please believe this. At present, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu is persisting in His mood of anger because He is the independent Personality of Godhead. At some time, however, He will surely be merciful, for at heart He is very kind. If you also persist, His persistence will increase. It is better for you to bathe and take prasada. In due course, His anger will automatically subside.

(The devotees leave.)

Narrator: When Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu went to see Lord Jagannatha in the temple, Haridasa would stay a long distance away and see Him. Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu is the ocean of mercy. Who can understand Him? When He chastises His dear devotees, He clearly does so to reestablish the principles of religion or duty. After all the devotees saw this example, a mentality of fear grew among them. Therefore, they all stopped talking to women, even in dreams. In this way, a complete year passed and still there was not a sign of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu's mercy towards him. Thus, at the end of one night, Chota Haridasa, after offering Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu his respectful obeisances, departed for Prayag without saying anything to anyone.

Chota Haridasa had conclusively decided to attain shelter at the lotus feet of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. Thus, he entered deep into the water at Triveni, the confluence of the Ganges and Yamuna at Prayaga and in this way gave up his life. Immediately after committing suicide in this way, he went in his spiritual body to Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu and received the mercy of the Lord. However, he still remained invisible.

(The following is acted out.) In a spiritual body resembling that

of a Gandharva, Chota Haridasa, although invisible, would sing at night for Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu to hear. No one but the Lord, however, knew this.

(Chota Haridasa sings a nice bhajan as Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu listens.)

Scene Four

Caitanya: (to devotees) Where is Haridasa? Now, you may bring him here.

Devotee: One night, at the end of a full year, Chota Haridasa got up and went away. No one knows where he has gone.

(Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu is mildly smiling. He leaves. The devotees hear Chota Haridasa singing.)

Govinda: Haridasa must have committed suicide by drinking poison. Because of this sinful act, he has now become a brahmana ghost!

Devotee: We cannot see his material form but still we hear his sweet singing. Therefore, he must have become a ghost!

Sivananda: No, this is not a good guess. Chota Haridasa chanted the Hare Krsna mantra throughout his life and served Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. Moreover, he is dear to the Lord and has died in a holy place. Haridasa cannot have become degraded; he must have attained liberation. This is a pastime of Mahaprabhu. You will all understand it later.

Scene Five

(Sivananda Sena enters with many devotees.)

Sivananda: Jaya Sri Krsna Caitanya!
(He offers obeisances to Mahaprabhu.)
Where is Chota Haridasa?

Caitanya: A person is sure to achieve the results of his fruitive activities.

Sivananda: Chota Haridasa entered deep into the confluence of the

Ganges and Yamuna at Prayag and gave up his life.

Caitanya: If with sensual intentions one looks at women, this is the only process of atonement.

Narrator: Then all the devotees concluded that because Chota Haridasa had committed suicide at the confluence of the rivers Ganges and Yamuna, he must have ultimately attained shelter at the lotus feet of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. In this way, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu performs His pastimes, which greatly satisfy the ears and minds of pure devotees who hear about them.

This incident manifests the mercy Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, His teaching that a sannyasi should remain in the renounced order and the deep attachment to Him felt by His faithful devotees. It also demonstrates the glories of holy places and shows how the lord accepts His faithful devotee. Thus, the Lord fulfilled five or seven purposes by performing one pastime. The pastimes of Lord Caitanya are like nectar and the are deep like the ocean. People in general cannot understand them. Please hear these pastimes with faith and confidence. Do not argue, for arguments will produce a contrary result.

Praying at the lotus feet of Sri Rupa and Sri Raghunatha, always desiring their mercy, Sri Krsnadasa Kaviraj has narrated the Sri Citanya-caritamrta, following in their footsteps.

(Music. Kirtan.)